

Lesson Objectives (suggested grade levels: 4-8)

In this lesson, students will focus on identifying lyrics and rhythms found in American roots music. They will also compare the music featured in the exhibition to the music they listen to, and ultimately will be able to write their own stanza. Music is a form of personal expression, and they will be able to experience it.

National Standards:

Social Studies:

Culture: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity.

Time, Continuity, & Change: Social Studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ways human beings view themselves in and over time.

People, Places & Environments: Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of people, place, and environments.

English Language Arts:

Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and non-print texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

Students use a variety of technological and information resources (e.g. libraries, databases, computer networks, video) to gather and synthesize information and to create and communicate knowledge.

Students develop an understanding of and respect for diversity in language use, patterns, and dialects across cultures, ethnic groups, geographic regions, and social roles.

CONTENTS

Pre-visit

Worksheet 1: *Is Music Part of Your Life?*

Visit

Worksheet 2: *Explore the Exhibition: Look, Listen, and Move!*

Post-visit



Activity 1: *I've Got the Blues*

Activity 2: *Music Bee*

Materials

Computer with internet access

Lesson 3: Teacher Instructions and Background

What is meaningful in your life? Musicians reflect on their lives and the world around them through their songs. Gospel artists are inspired to sing about their religious faith and spirituality. Blues songs feature lyrics about the realities of poverty, racism, and broken relationships. Folk musicians have long been inspired to speak out on social and political causes in their music. All roots musicians challenge and celebrate America through their songs.

Each lesson is intended to prepare students for a visit to *New Harmonies: Celebrating American Roots Music* and to follow up on that visit after your return to the classroom.

The **Pre-visit** worksheet is designed to encourage students to think about their own personal interests in music. The **Visit** activities invite the students to collect information and apply their new-found knowledge in the classroom. The **Post-visit** activities draw on their own heritage and the information learned during their museum visit. All of these activities can be completed in groups or by individual students.

Pre-visit

Several days before visiting the exhibit, make copies of Worksheet 1: *Is Music Part of Your Life?* for all of the students. Distribute the worksheet a few days before the visit so that students have enough time to consider their personal musical interests.

Visit

Before going to the exhibit, copy Worksheet 2: *Explore the Exhibition: Look, Listen, and Move!* for each student in the class. Hand out the page to each student just before the students do the activity. (Preferably, this will occur after any guided tours or as part of the scavenger hunt.) Make sure each student has a pencil (not pen) to write down the information. (Pens make permanent marks, and museums generally prefer the use of pencils in their exhibits.) You may wish to collect the papers from the students before leaving the exhibition.

Post-visit

After returning from your visit, targeted classroom activities will help the students apply information learned during the exhibition visit. These activities involve higher-level thinking skills such as interpretation, synthesis, thinking hypothetically, and/or expressing judgment.

PRE-VISIT

Worksheet 1: *Is Music Part of Your Life?*

BACKGROUND

Music is all around us—on the radio, on television, on the computer. As you prepare to visit *New Harmonies*, think about how music is a part of your life.

1. What's on your playlist? What are some things you like about that type of music?
2. Do you like to sing? Name some of the songs that you like to sing. Write down the words to one of your favorite songs.
3. Do you know how to read music? Do you sing in a choir or group? Describe some of your experiences singing with a group.
4. Do you play an instrument? If so, what instrument? Do you play in a band? What type of music does your group play? What have been some of your experiences playing for others?
5. Do you have family/friends who either sing or play an instrument? Who are they and what do they play? Do any of them perform in public? Have you seen them perform in public? What is it like to watch them?

VISIT

Worksheet 2: *Explore the Exhibition: Look, Listen and Move!*

BACKGROUND

As you tour *New Harmonies*, look and listen for lyrics and pay attention to the beats and rhythms you hear in the music. Use the information you gather during your tour to answer the questions below.

1. Write down the lyrics that interest you in *Sacred Songs*:
2. Write down the phrases that appealed to you in *Country*:
3. Write down the lyrics that were stirring to you in the *Blues*:
4. Write down the lyrics that you especially like in *Dance*:
5. Find lyrics that say something about a social cause:
6. Find lyrics that make you feel good about your country:
7. Find lyrics written in a language other than English:
8. As you listen to the music in the exhibit, does it inspire you to move to the rhythm? Do different songs make you want to dance or clap your hands? Which songs? Why?
9. Write down the name of the song in which you really felt the rhythm:

POST-VISIT

Activity 1: *I've Got the Blues*

BACKGROUND

Musicians express their thoughts and feelings through the songs that they write. Their lyrics can convey happiness or sadness, celebrate cultural traditions, or challenge authority.

This activity will allow students to reflect on the information they gathered in the exhibition and apply it to create their own songs based on their own interests. Students can work individually, in pairs, or in groups.

1. The basic style of early blues songs included a three-line stanza. The first two lines were generally the same lyrics, followed by a “response” from the musician’s guitar. The third line featured a rhyming response to the idea in the first two lines.

An example of the three-line stanza:

*Everyday, everyday I have the blues
Ooh, everyday, everyday I have the blues
When you see me worryin' baby, yeah it's you I hate to lose.*
—From “Everyday I Have the Blues,” by B.B. King

2. Blues songs can be about anything! Students can write a three-line stanza about their breakfast, a ride on the school bus, walking to school, classes, their pet, their friends, their family—whatever they want to talk about. Blues lyrics can be happy or sad.
3. Now, the student(s) should recite the lyrics aloud and listen to the flow. Usually, they have to repeat them several times to find the rhythm in the stanza. Does it rhyme? Next, have them read the lyrics to a friend and see what they think. Have the student(s) think about how the stanza compares to the words and rhythms in their favorite songs.
4. Are there any musicians in the class? Have students put their words to the music of a famous blues song. They could also play two similar lines of music as other students recite their stanzas, or perhaps the music teacher could accompany students as they recite their stanzas.

POST-VISIT

Activity 2: *Music Bee*

BACKGROUND

Remember the television game show *Name That Tune*? This activity will test students' knowledge of the various styles of roots music they encountered in the exhibition. Have a computer with internet access available for listening to music samples.

1. Divide the class into two teams. Students can work as a team and shout out answers, or students can be called one-at-a-time to answer questions in a spelling bee-style format.
2. Select several music samples from one of the New Harmonies-related playlists available at the digital music services listed below. Play them at random. Have the students guess the song, artist, or style of music.

Music services:

iTunes *New Harmonies* iMix:

<http://phobos.apple.com/WebObjects/MZStore.woa/wa/viewIMix?id=217996522>

3. Track each teams' scores on the blackboard.